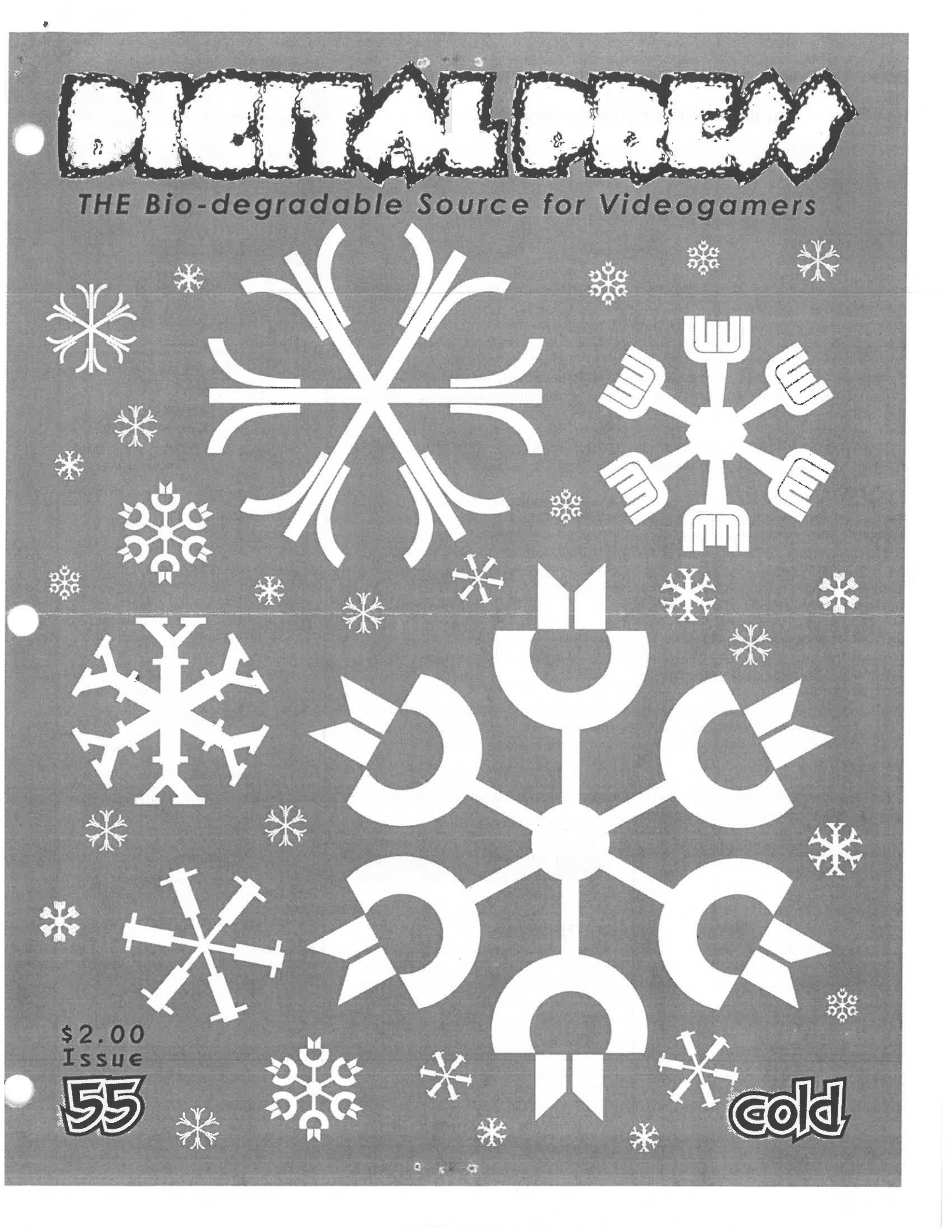
DIGITAL PRESS

THE Bio-degradable Source for Videogamers



$2.00
Issue
55

cold

Cold.
Editor's BLURB by Dave Giarrusso

They say that in the Spring "a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." Yup, that's what "they" say.

But allow me to step into the virtual shoes of "they" for a moment. I've got a little saying of my own to lay on you. Here goes:

In the Winter, a young man's fancy HEAVILY turns to thoughts of video games. S'right, gang. And it's the truth. A little something you can take to the bank. (The snowbank?)

By the time the first snowflake is merely a glimmer of moisture in the atmosphere, all the game companies are really plowing their games into retail outlets, just in time for the holiday shopping season. With an avalanche of advertising and a blizzard of bonus items, video gamers are whipped up into a game buying frenzy during the last quarter of each year.

Gamers, in turn, break out the winter clothes and warm gear so they can weather the snowstorm of new game releases. Lots of gamers, anyway.

With outdoor temperatures all the way up into the high single digits, some gamers bypass the arctic tundra-traversing game shopping crowds altogether, opting instead to order new releases from the safety and warmth of their barco-loungers and comfy couches via the world wide web. The weather outside is frightful. So I'll be right in here, basking in the warm glow of my cathode-ray computer monitor and/or my toasty TV set. And if I want frightful, I can always pop in **Eternal Darkness**, **House of the Dead 2**, or **Gubble**.

Whichever path is chosen, the end result is the same: more games. Lots more games. So many more games that, as I'm fond of saying, a young man's fancy heavily turns to thought of video games.

Then in a few months, when the ice and snow start to melt away revealing the crocuses and daffodils and tulips that were safely tucked in for a long winter's nap, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. The love of video games. Just like they say.

Anyhoo, from everyone here at DPHQ, SEASON'S GREETINGS and game ON, gang! We'll check in with you again in 2004.

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ON THE COVER

Brrr!
by Dave Giarrusso

"Snow Days" were always a nice little surprise, especially if they fell on the final day or so before the holiday vacation, effectively extending the duration of the holidays and allowing us to spend that much more time in front of our TV sets with the ol' game consoles. But did you ever really study those individual snowflakes?

DIGITAL PRESS # 55
NOV / DEC 2003

Founders Joe Santulli, Kevin Oleniacz

Editors-In-Chief Joe Santulli, Dave Giarrusso

Senior Editors Al Backiel, Jeff Cooper, John Hardie, Sean Kelly

Staff Writers Larry Anderson, Ian Baronofsky, Tony Bueno, Roloff de Jeu, Don Evanoff, Howard Hirsch, Russ Perry Jr., Don Rogers, Scott Stilphen, Monique Trulson

Production Rodney Johnson

Art Dave Giarrusso

Special Thanks Monique Trulson, Josh Zepeda, Chris Giarrusso

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Sears Six Switch

Yesterday my friend dropped off the package of Atari goods I [talked]about earlier. System works, all the games work except for **Pac-Man** (doesn't work damnit! argh)...and **Tennis** works fine but is missing the black bottom piece and it just has the board sticking out like more modern cartridge games. What was this black plastic bottom for anyways? I played the system for a while, and noticed that with the paddles, they are unresponsive! I noticed this a week earlier when I tried playing my own previous system with it's paddles. Do these things just 'die' all of a sudden? Strange.

So in whole system works fine 5 of 6 games work. Joysticks are fine. Paddles giving problems (but then again, so are mine and I thought those worked too! *insert *Twilight Zone* theme*)

Now the rarity question. When I picked this VCS 4 switch up, I was surprised at how LIGHT the thing is! It's featherweight! So this makes me wonder about my older system. It is a Sears Tele-Games 6 switch and the thing is at least 3 or 4 times as heavy! So if the 'Heavy Sixer' is the rarest of the bunch as I've read, and these Sears units were actually made by Atari but labelled differently...what's the difference in rarity of the Atari and Sears versions? Which was more common? Is this Sears machine that's heavy as a brick compared to this 4 switch Atari unit I just got a nice thing to have?

I played Tennis for about an hour. Good game - The Manimal

In my experience, paddles don't just up and die, rather they tend to get "jittery" slowly over time. The plastic cart piece you mention is a door to keep out dust and other nasty stuff (dirt, pet hair, oatmeal, Jell-O, hamburgers, etc.). Activision carts never used the door and most later carts dropped the door as a way to cut corners on costs.

As for the console variations - Sears consoles generally turn up less frequently than the Atari consoles in the wild, but there are plenty of both to go around. As far as the rarity and value of each variation, the "heavy sixers" can sometimes go for around $30 (as opposed to $20 for a "regular" sixer) or more, depending upon who the buyer is. Since we only use our consoles for playing the games and not for weight lifting (we're lazy like that) they're all the same to us. But regardless of the weight, it definitely sounds like you're enjoying it, and that's the most important thing of all!

Nose Knows Nintendo

I collect NES, SNES, N64 cartridges. I have so many and it have such odd scent (even these new). This enough irritating me.

Can you say me how to remove this scent or to neutralize?

Sorry fo we English.

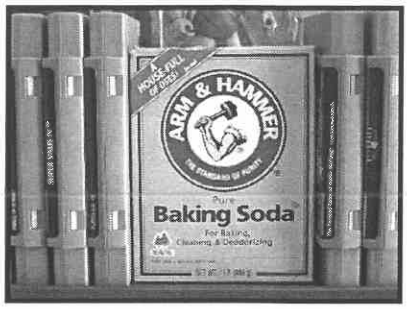
Best regards - Pawel

Hi Pawel!

Hopefully you don't get shunned by your office mates, or have the dubious distinction of being able to clear a room at a party. If so, you might want to question whether or not it's the games that are scent-i-fied.

If, however, the odorous emanations are courtesy of your cart collection, I have a few different tips to share.

You might try some good old fashioned lemon juice on the plastic cart cases, but make sure you don't accidentally get any on the labels!

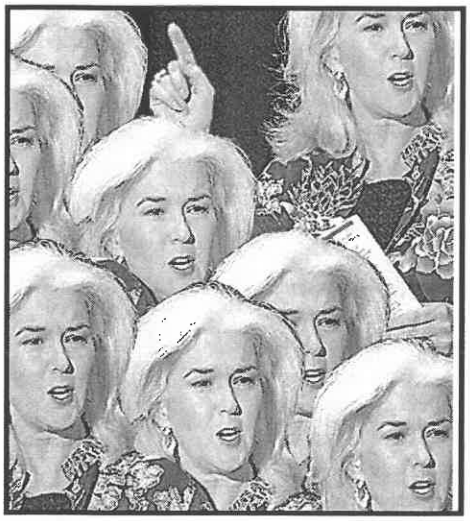


If you've got shelves upon shelves of games that have that not-so-fresh feeling, you could also try hitting the area with a shot of Lysol spray, or maybe hang a couple of those pine tree car air-fresheners in the room. A box of baking soda might also work wonders.

Two birds with one stone: for secondhand games with someone else's name written on them in permanent marker, a little spritz of cologne will help remove the ink... and might just knock out the scent, too. For fighting games in particular, we recommend High Karate.

Yeah, we're as helpful as a hundred Heloises here at DPHQ.

Good luck! And game ON!



Got a gripe? Thinking of thanking us? Cooking up a question? Address all your eloquent e-mails to us at digitalpress@email.com. If we respond to your letter in a fantastic future issue, you'll be able to brag to your fun-lovin' friends and family!

the Wacky World of... Al

by Al Backiel

Bits and Pieces, thawed by Big Al

COLLECTING EGM

For the longest time I thought that I had a complete collection of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*. I had been collecting every issue since it premiered back in May of 1989. They are still going strong today having passed the one-hundred issue mark in November 1997. As part of that celebration, that issue I believe came with three posters advertising three games (**Croc**, **Star Wars**, and **Colony Wars**). If you put the flip sides together you got a panoramic view of all one-hundred covers in order. When I recently compared this multi-poster to my stacks of *EGM*, I discovered that I was missing two issues. No wonder! Both issues weren't even called *EGM*. One was called *Top Score* and the other was actually an *Annual Buyer's Guide*. There were two other occasions where the annuals were counted in the numbering. Those I managed to pick up. These issues were easy to miss if you were just looking for the latest *EGM* on the stands. The weird part is that the annuals from later years were not counted as part of the set, which adds to the confusion. I have included scans of issues #1, #5, #7, #15 which are the most likely to be missed. The premiere issue may be quite rare since it was done in a unique format.

EGM, Issue #1, May 1989.

EGM issue #5, October 1989: The 1990 Video Game Buyer's Guide.

EGM2

In 1998, *EGM* created a spinoff magazine called *EGM2*. I bought the first few issues, but had to stop because it was getting too expensive to collect both. Leonard Herman was kind enough to supply me with the full story of *EGM2*. It ran from July 1994 thru July 1998. With the fiftieth issue, it was renamed *Expert Gamer*. That magazine ran from August 1998 thru October 2001. At that time it morphed into *Game Now*, which has been publishing since November 2001 and is still available today. The reason for the release of *EGM2* was because at the time there was so much video game news that *EGM* considered publishing every two weeks. The problem was that the magazine would only be on the stands two weeks and have to be replaced by a new issue. However, by releasing a new monthly magazine that came out two weeks after *EGM* came out (and two weeks before the next issue of *EGM*), they could have two magazines out on the stands and each would be there for a month. Double the coverage and double the advertising revenue! The format was very similar to the original. During the end of its run, it started becoming a *Tips & Tricks* style magazine.

ONE-SHOTS

There were also a couple of one-shot issues that I am aware of. One of these was *EGM 3-D* (November 1995), which was done entirely in 3-D and came with Polaroid-like glasses. The 1989 and 1994 *Video Game Buyer's Guide* are two annuals that I have that are not counted as part of the first one-hundred Issues. I am sure there are other years that exist. There is one other glitch in collecting *EGM*. A number of months were produced with as many as five different "collector covers". The latest issue (#173) for instance features **The Lord of The Rings: Return of The King** as the cover story. Each cover variety features a different character. Do you have to have every different cover to have a complete collection? Before you answer yes, remember that the rest of the issue is exactly the same in content. Not to mention the expense ($25). I never went this route, but I am sure there are purists who would insist upon it. Getting every different cover is a challenge in itself, because some covers were only available to subscribers. Good luck in hunting down every issue!

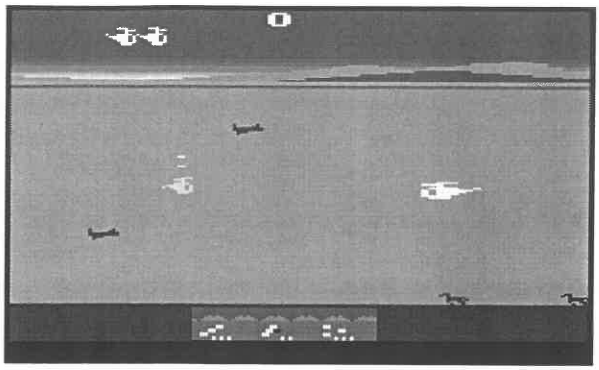
EGM, Issue #7, December 1989: Top Score!

EGM, Issue #15, December 1991: Video Game Buyer's Guide

THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?

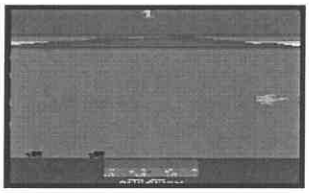
There is a rather bizarre clone of

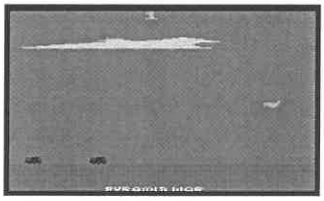
Chopper Command (2600) by Activision out there somewhere. I came across it on a multi-cart as a game called **Spy vs. Spy**. It has absolutely nothing to do with the comic characters (created by Antonio Prohias) from *Mad Magazine*. It is also different from the other clone, **Pyramid War** by Rainbow Vision. In Spy vs. Spy the convoys that must be protected from the multi-warhead missiles consist of galloping **horses**! In Pyramid War it's tanks. In Chopper Command it's trucks. Each version has different graphics. As far as I can tell the game play is the same except for Pyramid Wars, which is harder because there is no long-range radar.

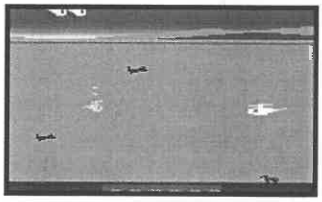


2600 Spy vs. Spy cart (note the screenshot in the lower left hand corner) and screenshot. This lame graphics hack leaves us wanting a 2600 cart featuring the Black Spy and the White Spy from *Mad* magazine.

Al dares to compare all three games...







Game	CHOPPER COMMAND	PYRAMID WARS	SPY VS. SPY
Convoy type	Trucks	Tanks	Horses
Player aircraft type	Apache helicopter	Hellcat prop fighter	Bell helicopter
Mountains?	Yes	No	Yes
Sky	1/4 of screen	3/4 of screen	1/4 of screen
Long-range radar?	Yes	No	Yes
Easy to hit enemies	Small white helicopters	Blue hellcats	White helicopters
Difficult to hit enemies	Blue MIG fighters	Blue passenger jet (?)	Green bombers
Reinforcements	Smaller icon	Almost exact icon	Smaller icon

CORRECTIONS to recent DP issues

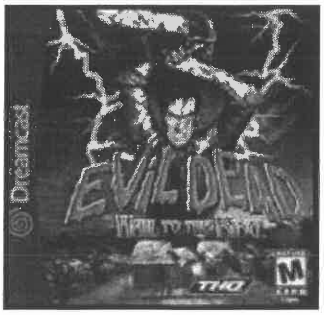
Whoops! One of the clues in the crossword in DP#51 (80s) was incorrect. **Carnival** was written by Steve Kitchen not Garry Kitchen.

Oops, Dave G did it again! In DP#54: cinema, The **Evil Dead** review (page 16) pertains to the Dreamcast **Hail to the King** game, NOT the PS2 **Boomstick** game. In the interest of fairness, Tony hasn't even played the PS2 version yet. It's also worth mentioning that this blunder was entirely the fault of Dave G, so feel free to throw one book or all books or what at him the next time you see him.

HOT OFF THE DP NEWSWIRE!

Our own Tony Bueno just called in with this update to his Mr. Do! FAQ:

Do Run Run! was released on the Atari ST home computer! Electrocoin published Universal's final installment of the **Mr. Do!** series on the ST machines, so if you're a Do! completist, you'll want to hunt this one down. Tony hasn't booted it up just yet, but if the screenshots on the back of the box are any indication, the game looks to be a spot-on conversion.



a WOMAN'S touch

by Monique Trulson

Multi-Console Quandary: Left Out in the COLD

Finally it had arrived - yet another opportunity to experience the exhilaration of speeding down snow covered mountains, the wind in your face, your board sturdy and slick under your feet, the tunes pounding in your ears as the snow stung your face. Tight turn... carving your way towards yet another jump... barely missed a knockdown by another rider anxious to get in front of you. Handplant, to drop effortlessly into that half-pipe... grind that rail... perform a flawless Superman... I can hardly wait...

...to buy **SSX3**, of course. You didn't really think I'd leave the comfort of my living room for this, did you? Especially when my character actually still FITS in HER skin tight ski pants, something that went the way of the dinosaurs for me? Riiiight...

SSX3 on the Gamecube. Is it a contender for Monique's gameroom?

So it was off to the game store to pick up the latest in the SSX Trilogy, sure that I could emerge victorious from any challenge that might be presented. Little did I know that I had to face a challenge of a different sort before I could even take that virgin run down Metro-City.

See, here's the issue: SSX3, like many other of the new titles, was released for all three major consoles.

And I own all three.

So which one is best? What do I buy? If I get this one, is that one better? If I get that one, will I be left out in the cold in regards to certain features? What are my friends buying and why? Let me paint a picture here – me standing in the store with three game boxes in my hand, blank look of confusion slowly turning into desperation as the options are weighed - Dolby 5.1 Surround Sound! Yes! I must have that! No wait! This one is online! I MUST have THAT! But... but... this one lets me rip my own soundtrack *gasp* who can live without THAT! OH! Connectivity to my adorable GBA! That one then!! The clerks try to help, but usually have only tried one version on whatever console they prefer and therefore cannot offer an intelligent comment. Not that this stops them, as they usually assume I'm one of "THOSE" moms - you know, the ones that are fooled by their kids into buying **GTA3** because, "honestly, mom, it's a car game! ALL my friends have it!..." Of course, when they find out I probably play as much, if not more than they do, the poor clerks are often reduced to shrugging and repeating the fact that they like this one because it's their favorite console, or their only console, or some other such oh-so-convincing statement.

The PS2 version features ONLINE play!

Apparently I'm scarred from my experience with my only "long term" video game obsession, **Phantasy Star Online**. Excuse me while I shake and shudder with withdrawal symptoms at the mere mention of PSO - oh, how I loved that game... oh, how I still love the people I met through that game... OH, how I spent FAR too much money on that game. You see, I bought that particular game three times, and to this very day I'm fighting the urge to do it a fourth time, in search of that Meseta-induced high.

Does the XBox version boast the best graphic blandishment?

I first purchased that game on the Dreamcast, the day it came out... I played it for YEARS, literally, purchasing **Phantasy Star Online Ver. 2** the day IT came out for the Dreamcast... and then repeating the scenario the day it came out for the GameCube. Upon the release of the same game on the XBox, many of my GameCube pals abandoned the Ragol That Nintendo Built, to experience the ultimate add-on for PSO, the ever elusive and much desired (drumroll please) Voice Chat. Oh how painful, as I could not join that crowd, blessed as I was with only 56K as my pathway to PSO. Listening to the stories, I felt so LEFT OUT, and I cursed the power that is Microsoft for my lonely fate. After all I was MORE than willing to join my friends on the XBox version with a keyboard in place of the voice chat, why wouldn't they support both connections? Of course, now that I have the ability to join, the interest has faded, my friends have moved on, and I have no reason to buy it. (Or so I tell myself every time I see a copy sitting on a shelf... "NO REASON... NO REASON!!")

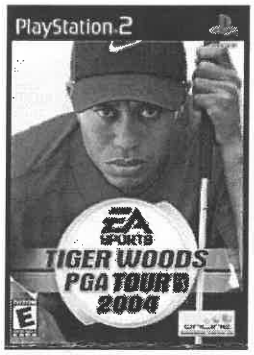
Apparently this has now colored me in regards to all future purchases, because I truly felt like I missed out on quite the experience, which has

Monique bought this one the day it came out. And she also bought it for the GameCube. That's right, she's one of US, Jack.

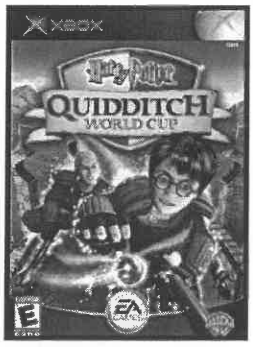
in turn led to the quandary I find myself in with each new release that spans more than one console. Very rarely have I found reviews and/or previews which touch upon the strengths and weaknesses of each version, thereby requiring me to take certain preferences into account in regards to each new choice. With **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004**, the Playstation 2 won because of the online support. The downside to this purchase? I purchased **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003** for the GameCube, therefore I could not open the special tournaments that required a save file from that game, even though I OWN it and I played it and I have a save file! With **Soul Calibur II**, the GameCube won because the special character was Link, and who doesn't love Link? The downside to this particular purchase? Having seen a version running on the XBox, I believe the graphics are better. Our most recent conundrum came in the form of **Harry Potter's Quidditch World Cup**. Now I admit to not knowing much about this game before walking into the store - my son wanted it after seeing it on commercials, and it looked like it had all around appeal for everyone in the house, so it'd be fun. I literally stood there trying to compare graphics from the packaging, and determine what features I might want - and the winner? The XBox version. However, this time the main rationale was a classic bait and switch from my UberMommy Tricks and Tactics book – think about it!! If the kids want to play a video game and play on the XBox, that will free up the GameCube for me! I can play more SSX3, unhindered! Wrap it up, Mr. Game Salesman sir, and thank you very much! Besides, we don't have many XBox games, and I don't want that poor console to feel lonely and unloved – we're an equal opportunity gaming family.

That brings us back to SSX3, the most painful of my multi-console release purchases to date, I'd have to say. I was torn between the Playstation 2 and GameCube versions. My introduction to this series was **SSX Tricky** on the GameCube, so I was slightly biased towards that console to start with - especially after purchasing a used copy of SSX for my PS2, and not being terribly impressed with it. The XBox version was quickly ruled out, despite the possibility that it could have the best graphics - why, you ask? Well, the enhanced sound features did not impress me in this case, as my XBox is not hooked up (yet) to my surround sound system, and to be honest, I hate the XBox controllers - they're simply too butch for my *ahem* dainty feminine hands. I envisioned hours of game play, and did not want to experience those hours with that bulky piece of plastic in my grip. So I compared the others - I searched out reviews, previews, reader comments, anything that might give me a sign as to which way to go on this. I queried friends, I created online polls, I wanted a signpost that would clearly state "This is the way to SSX3 harmony," and in the end, the GameCube won. Why? Plain and simple - the controller. It's my favorite, it feels the best in my hands, and yes, perhaps I am a bit biased because Nintendo has always had a soft spot in my heart and therefore in my home - but damn I love my GameCube.

So I bought it.



With the help of online play, Tiger Woods sinks his 2004 EA Sports title onto the PS2 at Monique's house.



Quidditch conundrum: parent perfectly plans playtime, plays personal picks on the Cube.

Monique likes Link. So she bought the GameCube version of SC II. Hopefully she won't bump into Heihachi at the supermarket...

And I love it. And I play it daily, building up Kaori's stats so I can whip Nate's butt in Freestyle on Peak 2.

And now many of my friends have the Playstation 2 version, for the online play. Well then. I'm not missing much. I mean, I can play split screen with my kids! Yeah! That's just as good, isn't it?

... ...

Hmm. I wonder if I can find a used copy, so I can get online too, and not be left out in the cold yet again...

Looking for a bargain?

ebaY

Current bid	US $0.49
Quantity	1
Time left	0:01

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RANDOM REVIEWS

WINTER GAMES

Epyx
Atari 2600
1983

Al Backiel wins the Gold Medal in the luge, celebrates with hot cocoa

Element	Al	Joe	Dave
Graphics	8	10	8
Sound	7	7	7
Gameplay	8	9	8
OVERALL	7	9	7

Features:
- **Seven Olympic events**
- **Five different screens**
- **The agony of defeat**

Winter Games was another entry in the popular Epyx multi-sport series that originally appeared on early computers. There are seven different Olympic sports on the 2600 version. This is the same number that was on the Commodore 64. The 2600 graphics are obviously not as detailed. There was also a trade-off in that the 2600 got slalom and luge instead of freestyle skating and figure skating. Both platforms have a title screen complete with Olympic theme, a country select menu, a next up screen and final results screen. Up to eight players representing different countries can compete, but only one or two at a time. Most events will allow you three attempts. You can practice any event by using the game select switch or you can compete in each event in this order:

2600 Winter Games: the thrill of victory...

SLALOM: Not as easy as say **Skiing** by Activision or some of the other ski carts I've played. You have to constantly turn (traverse) to slow down or wind up missing half the gates. You also have to avoid collisions with people (officials?) and trees (what idiot would design a course with trees so close?) In the real world, if you miss a gate you're disqualified. Here you get a three second penalty for every missed gate, but you still qualify.

BOBSLED: This is supposed to be a two-man bobsled. There is no push off sequence, you go right down the course. You can control speed with up and down motions. The trick is to avoid hitting the edge of the course and flipping over. I always wanted to try this in real life despite the danger. It looks like a fun thing to do. Probably a rush similar to a roller coaster.

SKI JUMP: You have to hit the fire button at the right time to get a good takeoff. Once in the air there is a split screen close-up of your flight that must be adjusted to correct form. If not perfect, you'll go splat just like that guy they used to illustrate "the agony of defeat." No matter how bad you crash, you still get three tries. This event requires the most practice.

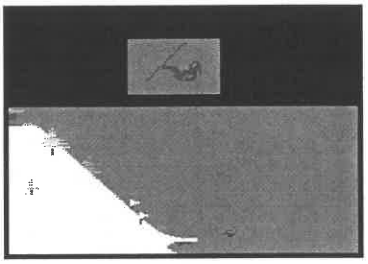
BIATHLON: Cross-country skiing combined with target shooting. I found the targets hard to hit. There is a rather bizarre pulsating heart meter that you have to be in synch with by moving the joystick left to right. The targets pop up sporadically and the highest accuracy wins. This is my least favorite event. It looks like you are going uphill sometimes. The pulsating heart kind of freaks me out.

SPEED SKATING: This is a split screen event vs. a computer pacer in a one-player game. For multiple players, two players could be paired off. Distance is 200 meters, which is weird because the shortest distance in Olympic competition is 500 meters. The trick here is to develop a left to right joystick rhythm. The computer opponent is no pushover.

HOT DOG: This event is now called Freestyle Aerials. Here you get three chances to perform as many tricks as possible and still land right side up. The tricks are the Daffy Duck, Half Flip and Swan. You get extra points for rotations. The more difficult the stunt, the higher the score. I found this event a hoot, because I wanted to complete all the different stunts.

LUGE: One-man sled. Similar to the bobsled run except there is less control. It looks like the same course. Basically, you got this event because all that changes is the sled. Here the fire button must be used for braking. If you travel full speed, the odds are you'll flip over halfway down the course. Ouch! That smarts.

The final screen shows the gold, silver and bronze medal finishes and plays a little victory tune. There were Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia (1984) and Calgary, Canada (1988). I'm not sure which was the inspiration here. Snowboarding, a popular videogame subject today, first appeared in the 1998 games. As with all events, practice makes perfect. It is a good idea to mark down your initial score so that you can see how much your time improves with repeated play. This cart is somewhat scarce because it was one of the later releases. I don't understand why the 7800 version of Winter Games had only four events. There should have been room for more.



...and the agony of defeat!

3DO
3DO
1995

SNOW JOB

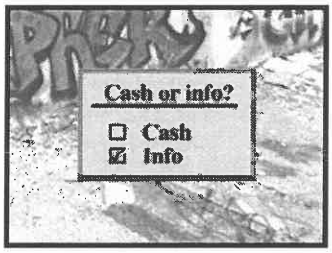
RANDOM REVIEWS

Joe Santulli heats up at the sight of Tracy Scoggins, uses beanie to cool back down...

Element	Joe	Tracy	Dana
Graphics	9	9	7
Sound	9	9	7
Gameplay	7	9	7
OVERALL	7	9	7

Features:
- **Tracy Scoggins**
- **Full Motion Video**
- **Mini games**

FMV. Full Motion Video. We made a big mistake years ago when we ran the FMV genre out of town like a common pygmy. Sure, it was a fad and was grossly misused (I still can't believe they tried to do a basketball game and several fighting games in FMV style), but there were some very practical game styles that worked wonders in this format. Those who quickly dispel silly games like **Sewer Shark** or **Supreme Warrior** may not have had the pleasure of experiencing the games that truly used this "gimmick" to its best advantage. Games like **Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective** and **Dracula Unleashed** are fine examples of how video could be effectively fused into a solid game. One of the last such solid titles appeared on the 3DO Multiplayer system circa 1995. This game, featuring a cast of unknowns highlighted by B-movie actress extraordinaire Tracy Scoggins and requiring the player to solve a mystery in a gritty city atmosphere never really got the attention it deserves. The game is **Snowjob.**



You never seem to have enough time or cash in this game. Just like real life.

Tracy Scoggins is the District Attorney whose life is in danger. You're the ex-boyfriend who also happens to be a private detective, determined to save her. You've got a few friends in the game, including the computer/technical geek who hooks you up with all kinds of gear, and the chief of police who assists you on the sly. Everyone else that you meet, more or less, couldn't give a fuck about you or your investigation and they'll need to be dealt with.

There are essentially three kinds of game screens. The most common is a 360-degree (with about 90-degrees of up and down) view of the area you're in. The familiar interface allows you to look, use, take, or talk to things on your screen. Many areas have sub-areas that you can walk to. Although nothing moves on this screen, it's still quite impressive, and you sometimes have to look very carefully in this mode since everything is photo-realistic. They didn't make it easy for you by using sprites to replace the objects you can interact with, but your cursor will indicate when you've passed over something when you can interact with it.

And what better way to say "I love you" than with the gift of a spatula... Not really.

The second screen is your inventory, where again you can look at, use, or discard items. Like any good puzzle-solving game, you'll often have to figure out which items can be used in which areas, and at what time. Many items have to be assembled, combined, or repaired. It will take a little brain power but you'll figure it out.

William and Joe agree: to hit on the stripper, or not to hit on the stripper. That is the question.

The third screen is the map. Places appear on the map as you learn of them in the game. For example, when you read in the paper about a murder, the crime scene appears as a location on your map. You can quickly travel from place to place, each trip takes you back to the 360-degree interface screen. Traveling on the map assumes the use of a subway and costs you some money and some time. Ah, about that...

Your primary enemies in this game are money and time, or rather the lack of it. Run out of money and you may as well pack it in (or cheat). Run out of time and you'll either get one of the many "bad endings" or will find yourself with nothing to do a few days into the game's story. The good news is that you'll be notified at the end of a day if you haven't completed that day's objectives. You CAN continue at this point but the only way to win is to back up and figure out what you didn't do on that day.

There are also a few mini-games along the way, varying in cheesy-ness (this is one of the game's weaker points). The daily crosswords are pretty good, if not a little clumsy to navigate, but the "arcade games" are laughable. The "Knock-Out" game is a reverse **Breakout** with a bikini-clad girl under the blocks and "Phaser

Continued on page 20

RANDOM REVIEWS

MORTAL KOMBAT MYTHOLOGIES SUB-ZERO

Midway
Playstation
1997

Dave G braves sub zero temperatures, plays this game on a glacier

Element	Dave	Matt	Ed
Graphics	7	7.5	5
Sound	6	5	5
Gameplay	5	3	5
OVERALL	6	4	5

Features:
- **Fatalities**
- **Progress based "learning"**
- **Repetitive gameplay**

One thing you've got to hand to the **Mortal Kombat** guys is their willingness to try out new things. Over the years they've consistently tried to add new elements to their games. Sometimes, they've been met with applause (friendships in **MK II**), and other times, they've been met with a shrug and an exclamation of "meh" ("dial-up" combos in **MK3**).

In the late 90s, John Tobias conjured up an adventure styled MK spinoff: MK Mythologies. Originally slated to include several different games, each spotlighting a particular character from the MK universe, the Mythologies series of games was a nifty multigame idea. Had it been successful, the Sub Zero game would have been followed by a Liu Kang game, and the Sonya/Jax game that eventually hit stores sans-Sonya in the form of **MK: Special Forces**.

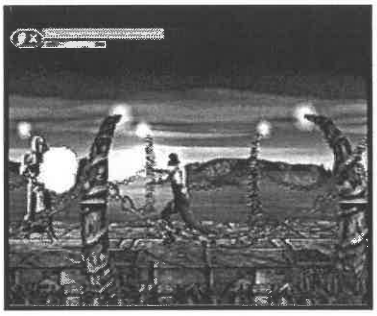
So what went wrong?

The release of MKM: SZ coincided with the arcade release of **MK4**. To capitalize on the cross promotion of the two games, the Mythologies story centers around Sub Zero (consistently one of the most popular characters throughout MK) and Quan Chi, the evil gent pictured on the side of the MK4 cabinet who has a penchant for ripping off a vanquished foe's leg... and beating him (or her) with it.

John Tobias took the lead with MKM: Sub Zero, the first non-arcade-style MK title released by Midway.

As for what went wrong, I'd bet that the things I like in this game are things that most gamers yawned at when it was released. First, I definitely dig the old-school, 2D feel. I'm not terribly interested in the majority of 3D platformers, so sticking with 2D for this one most certainly helped to keep my attention. It's more like **Donkey Kong Country** than **Tomb Raider**.

Second, I'm (generally, but not always) not much of a "quest" game player. Once there are what I'd consider to be "way too many" things to do, I lose interest. Feel free to call me an (oxy)moron if you'd like, but for the record, I love **GTAIII** and **Vice City**, so there's always an exception or five. Anyhoo, MKM:SZ offers enough things to do without going overboard - what Goldilocks might have deemed to be "just right."



Sub Zero crosses that electrical lava bridge thingie from Dragon's Lair.

Finish him! Some unruly thug puts the beatdown on Sub Zero.

And that's probably what "went wrong" in terms of what the general game playing masses were looking for in this game. It's nowhere near as complex as a more traditional platformer, so for the "target demographic" the game just fell flat. And that was, pretty much, that.

Which, in my humble opinion, is a shame, since porting the MK cast into a game like MKM:SZ is a neat idea. The graphics are pretty detailed, and the whole game has that eerie, dark MK look to it. Does the game have its share of boring moments? Sure. But as a whole, it's still very much worth plodding through, because there are plenty of cool B-movie styled cinema scenes to watch along the way. And if nothing else, the MK fatalities are present, and they're still better here than they are in some of the other MK titles. Cough - MK3 - cough.

For MK collectors who haven't picked this game up yet, you'll have an easier time scoring the N64 version of the game. The PSX disc used to be fairly easy to nab, but I've seen it turn up less frequently as of late. There are still plenty of 'em out in the wild, but if you've been putting this one off for a while, I'd suggest snagging it before the supply lines freeze up permanently.

Midnight Club II
XBox
2002

RANDOM REVIEWS

Ian Baronofsky CHILLS out behind the wheel of his COOL ride...

Element	Ian	Nick	Tom
Graphics	8	5	5
Sound	7	5	5
Gameplay	5.5	5	5
OVERALL	7.5	5	5
Muffins	delicious	too cold	too warm

Features:

- **Free-for-all races**
- **Fancy graphics**
- **Driving into buses**

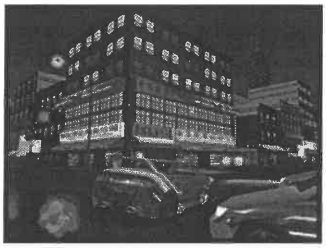
I don't play many games. I could say that I don't play ANY games, but that's really just a statistical comment. Considering I have more than 5000 different games which account for 300 years of playing time that I'll never have, the amount of games that I play is negligible enough to be statistically insignificant.

Now that I have that off my back, **Midnight Club II** for Xbox is the game I've been putting in my half-hour four-times-a-week with lately. This title has been released for every system and their mothers. So if you have a game console made in the last three years, you should be able to play it. But should you play it? Enough time wasted.

Now, the answer you've been waiting for. Maybe. I don't regret having spent about twelve hours playing it. That's a start. This game puts its weight on an arcade driving experience when it comes to the twitch action. And it's only about 40% twitch. Which is good, gotta have some twitch. The other 60% is a memory game. Can you remember where the hell you have to turn next? Can you remember where to punch the nitro? Can you remember why you keep running into that wall? I can't remember much, but I'm getting better with medication. There are three maps to learn: LA, Paris, and Japan. By the end of each 33.333% of the game that takes place in each locale, you kinda know your way around. But that may not even matter if you can keep up with the computer controlled racers who basically lead you through each goal. It's nice to follow them, but you pretty much have to know where they're going for most of the maps because things happen very quickly. So quickly, in fact, that if you miss a turn, you can pretty much just start the race over, if your goal is winning. It's one of those games where you have to drive a near perfect race to win. And you always have to save a nitro for the last few milliseconds to punch in front of the #1 car.

Whoops! I knew I shouldn't have taken that left turn at Albuquerque.

The controls are okay, a bit twitchy for my taste, and there's no option to use the directional pad to steer, which I favor in most drivers these days (alright I favor it in the only other post-Dreamcast driving game that I've played at length, **Project Gotham Racing**.) Another major frustration is that you have the one-button-does-it-all syndrome. The white jelly bean button does both slip-stream boost and nitro boost. And slip-stream boost only has a window for a few seconds, so it's typical to inadvertently waste a nitro when you meant to slip-stream. It's not like we have a shortage of buttons on today's controllers. Power sliding isn't much fun, and slows you down inordinately. Hitting the e-brake to corner will typically catapult you into last, which frustrates me because I play these games to slide.



Men don't stop to ask for directions. Especially not in Midnight Club II.

The graphics are pretty good, with reflections, shadows and the usual fancy pants Xbox stuff that really doesn't contribute noticeably to gameplay. I did experience some graphics glitches now and again as cars sunk below sea level and once I drove into a bus - I mean inside a bus. That's kind of a bit of Warren Robinett fun, but a glitch nonetheless. The story is not really a story, merely a diversionary level labeling system, which can be both amusing and dull. At least you only race against each character twice, so you only have to hear their repetitive taunts for an hour at a time. Some of them have a deep bag of commentary, whereas others are really dull. The story doesn't add or subtract.

Gameplay consists of driving goals of three main types. Sequential checkpoint races, free-for-all checkpoint races, and get to the checkpoint and get back races. And there's a free driving mode where you flag down other racers. The map is a **GTA** style transparent corner floater that assists in finding the next checkpoint and seeing that checkpoint you missed by a few pixels (another occasional annoyance), but it definitely doesn't help you on your first few runs through each race, when

Continued on page 20

RANDOM REVIEWS

ICE CLIMBER™

Nintendo Arcade / NES 1984

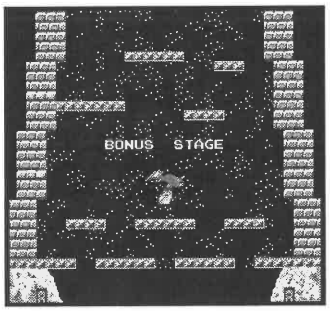
Joe Santulli freezes his butt off, gets attacked by birds, bears, and bigfoot.

Element	Joe	Dave	Tony
Graphics	5	6	5
Sound	4	5	5
Gameplay	6	7	5
OVERALL	5	6	5

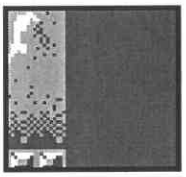
Features:

- **Hammers!**
- **Bludgeoning!**
- **Eskimos kicking ass!**

The secret life of the Eskimo. Eskimos seem pretty "cute" to us, I suppose, with their little igloos and their little furry hooded jackets, and their chubby little rosy cheeks. I must tell you my friends, that there is a dark side mired in the daily lifestyles of our friends up north. And it's dark not because their days are naturally shorter than ours but rather because it is saturated in murky deeds and dire, immoral etcetera. Allow me to share some of these hidden Eskimo rituals. I hope you are sitting down for this.

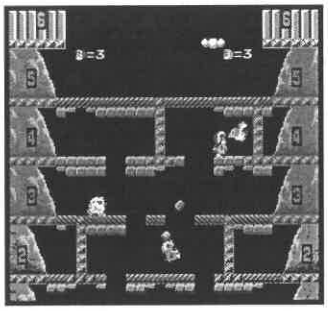


Bludgeon Bigfoot! (below) All in the name of harvesting eggplant and flying with the pterodactyls.



In the cold tundra, an Eskimo must learn to survive or perish. Eskimo law dictates that "the man who climbs the highest mountain shall survive." It's like "survival of the fittest" except that these Eskimos can get pretty chunky so the "fit" part isn't very practical. Still, you must be in superb physical condition to jump, smash, and climb the terrifying heights the common Eskimo must climb. Armed with only a gigantic deadly hammer of death, even the weakest understand the basic moves: 1) swing gigantic deadly hammer of death and; 2) swing gigantic deadly hammer of death while jumping. Both methods can smash ice blocks and stun the creatures of the arctic tundra, if not slay them outright. Eskimos enjoy brutal, violent, murderous climbing, you see.

The rigors of the mountain are many. Besides being eaten alive by angry birds of prey or gigantic, slow-moving flying insects, spotting Bigfoot is commonplace around these northern wastes. Yes, that's right, my friends, the Yeti exists. Fortunately, he is easily stunned by a swift blow with an enormous, skull-crushing instrument of chaos. There are also deadly icicles that will plummet from high above. Care must be taken to avoid these, or bash them to pieces with your terrifying bludgeoning hammer. If you think this is horrifying, an even more sinister creature awaits the brave Eskimo who takes too long to climb the sheer rock face: an indestructible polar bear! Of course, particularly stupid Eskimos exist too. These are the kind who break holes in the ice, climb through them and then later plummet to their death through the very hole they used to proceed. Silly little dead Eskimo!



Two-player simultaneous play. Giving the birds an "Eskimo kiss" is not recommended.

It is because of these many dangers that the judicious Eskimo typically travels with a partner. This provides good back-up when the situation turns ugly. "Two massively destructive tools of crushing are better than one" is the Eskimo mantra.

The path to the top requires a great deal of jumping, flailing, and killing and is further impaired by other, some may say supernatural, obstacles as well. For example, there are especially slippery ice paths that can send an unsuspecting Eskimo right over the edge, and there are shifting clouds that the magic-wielding Eskimo can leap upon to transport him horizontally across the mountain face. However, perhaps the most incredible proof that black magick exists here is the fact that Bigfoot can produce an unlimited number of magical ice bridges! That's right, if a Bigfoot encounters a hole, he'll run back to his apartment (Bigfoot homes are numbered to avoid Bigfoots not returning to their proper home after a night of drinking. Remember, the nights are VERY long there) and produce a magical bridge, sealing up the hole so that he may travel freely and eat any Eskimo not dexterous enough to smash his skull in when he approaches.

What's it all for, you may ask. What compels these chubby little bastards to brave these physical and metaphysical dangers of this dark, icy world? The answer is eggplant. Eggplant, and catching a ride on a pterodactyl. For once the perilous journey has ended, the hungry vegan Eskimo can now collect the ripe eggplants that are commonly found at the peaks of the highest mountains. It's a shame that these Eskimos can't enjoy meat, since

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Bally/Sente
Arcade
1984

SNAKE PIT

RANDOM REVIEWS

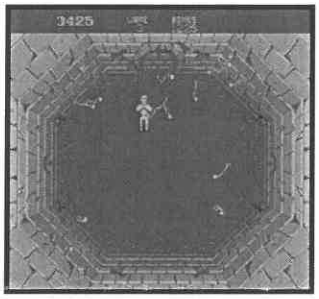
Tony Bueno is surrounded by COLD blooded reptiles...

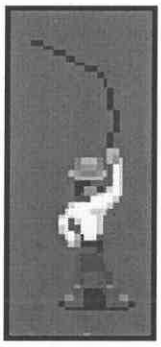
Element	Tony	Dave	Joe
Graphics	5	6	7
Sound	7	7	6
Gameplay	9	7	6
OVERALL	8	7	7

Features:

- **Joystick and Trakball!**
- **Oodles of snakes**
- **Whips, no chains**

When I first tried this title on MAME not so long ago, I hated it. I thought this was totally unfair, pointless, and controls were way off. Tweaking the sensitivity and keyboard commands just right, I decided to persist and play this one at length before making up my mind completely. Sometimes you will play a game a few times, like it, then go back and decide that the game was not so good after all (i.e. **Wacko**). I'm glad I didn't let my initial instincts cloud my judgment because this is like a sort of hidden treasure amongst many old arcade titles. I remember seeing ads for this one back in 1983, but never playing the machine itself. A pity that this was released back when arcades were on their deathbed, as Sente's **Snake Pit** is an intense, challenging, fast-paced, and incredibly fun classic.

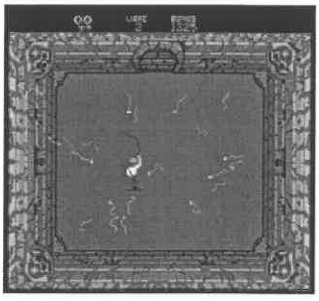




Snakes... Why did it have to be snakes? Below: Whip it! Whip it good. *Crack!*

Outback Jack's only appearance pits the whip-wielding adventurer in an unnamed catacomb combating snakes, spiders, and scorpions. The four-directional joystick is used to ward off enemies with the whip and a trackball is used for moving the player around the tomb. Snakes vary in color, speed and aggressiveness but when the player gets down to five and three remaining, they all speed up into faster, deadlier adversaries. A bonus timer counts down while acquired treasures rack up big bonus points.

Snake Pit is not very impressive graphically, and the sounds are likewise not the best I've heard from the era. But even without such nuances, that doesn't mean this one is easy, overly simplistic, or boring. Quite the contrary. Whatever Snake Pit lacks in audiovisuals, it more than makes up for with solid gameplay. Square, octagonal, and rectangular rooms await, and later levels implement fixed obstacles with which to contend as well. For example, the beginning levels have nothing on the ground, then the next crypt changes shapes and gets narrower, allowing for less maneuverability. After the first large scorpion is defeated, players are treated to a ball breaker of an "anti-bonus" level where the lights go out, and the only things you see are Jack, the impact point of the whip, and the eyes of the pursuing snakes. The primitive-sounding yet frantic "William Tell Overture" (I think that's what the *Lone Ranger* theme is called) on the soundtrack adds to the paranoia and desperation just as you were expecting a break. I love that! At intermediate levels, a pit is present in the center and after that, three floor tiles trigger lethal projectiles from the walls, just like the temple in the opening of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. As if hitting small targets with a short, limited weapon weren't taxing enough!



Did the Smash TV crew play a few rounds of Snake Pit?

The only games that I can use to compare to this one are **Robotron: 2084**, **Smash TV**, and **Total Carnage**. They are all in the same vein, using two controllers against all-surrounding opponents, but (apologies to Mr. Giarrusso in advance) I like Snake Pit better than the aforementioned titles. More limiting than Robotron because you whip, rather than shoot your adversaries, and the pit and floor tile traps I like better than Robotron's mines. Smash TV and Total Carnage have the player distracted with weapons, prizes, upgrades, and such, but Snake Pit's only goal is to eliminate the animals in the shortest time possible. Also, I appreciate Snake Pit's opening screen which allows players to begin at higher levels depending on their skill for more bonus points. So take the best elements from those games, offer more challenging limitations and an option to allow the player to compete at an initially more difficult scene for more points, and you have all the ingredients of a bona-fide classic arcade.

Highly recommended, the fact that this one hasn't been played out or over exposed should increase its appeal amongst most players. You owe it to yourself to try Snake Pit, damn it!

RANDOM REVIEWS

ALPINE SKI

Taito
Arcade
1982

Tony Bueno speeds down the slopes, executes a barrel roll

Element	Tony	Dave	Joe
Graphics	4	5	6
Sound	6	5	6
Gameplay	5	7	9
OVERALL	5	7	8

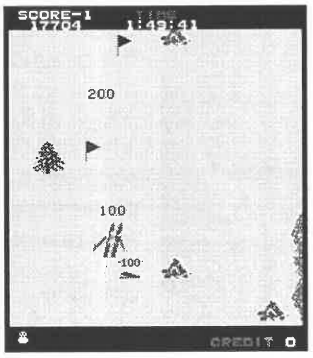
Features:

- **Downhill skiing**
- **Slalom**
- **Ski jump bonus round!**

Ah, the Taito arcade classics. What fond memories I have of playing these as a youth. **Alpine Ski** actually used to be my favorite video game. When I lived in Killeen (Ft. Hood), the highlight of my week used to be going to the roller skating rink, hot dog restaurant/arcade (I can't remember the name, but I do remember a large mascot similar to Mr. Peanut), or Putt-Putt. I used to love playing this and other early-80's classics more than anything else, but I always got frustrated because I was lousy at **Pac-Man**, **Gorf**, **Donkey Kong**, **Wizard of Wor**, and most others. Alpine Ski was one game at which even I could excel, but looking back now, I wonder if that was because it had a set timer instead of a finite number of lives. And the added bonus of never having to wait in a long line for one or two minutes of play (**Donkey Kong Jr.** springs to mind), it's easy to see why this sleeper hit appealed so much. Either way, it was a fun yet primitive (even for the time) title, and is not entirely without merit.

Up, up and away!

After the opening shot of the skier ascending on a lift, the game begins. Although it's downhill skiing, the screen moves up vertically. When the button is depressed, it causes you to move faster. Stationary numbers such as 100, 300, 1000, etc. are visible between trees, rocks, layers of ice, or other obstacles. Your goal is to reach the end in the allotted time, however these enticing point extras compel players to maneuver perilously between objects, very often resulting in your skier tumbling clumsily to the ground and costing you ten seconds. If you do succeed in making it to the bottom (which is NOT as easy as it sounds), it's on to the slalom. Here the points are between flags and you must gracefully flow between them for maximum point value. If you accidentally (or intentionally) run down a flag, a red –100 appears onscreen. I'm sure there are others, but this is the only arcade game I know that actually deducts points. As with downhill skiing, if you run into a tree, rock, or other skier, you will fall and lose time. The slalom is easier than the downhill race, but more than likely you will have less time unless you played very well on the first screen. If you do succeed in both (actually quite challenging) screens, you are given the opportunity to play one of those ski jump ramps (I don't know the name) where you go down a sharp incline and try to land successfully for bonus points. Here you must maintain control (left and right to stabilize) to not land on a tree.



Whoops! -100 points for hitting the flag, bub.

This may be a paradox, but Alpine Ski is a simple yet difficult game. Anyone can learn how to play in seconds, but it's actually fairly difficult to get even to the second level, let alone the ski jump. Another strategy (that is, if you don't mind lack of points) is to ignore all point values and simply ski as far as you can in the allotted time. Maybe this is not a wholly bad idea (although myself and many other old school gamers place points above all else when it comes to classics), since it's your best bet if you just want to get to the next level. It all comes down to personal preference. I do a little of both, and only go for points that are not too dangerous while progressing normally (which still earns points, only at a lower rate).

Although the sounds are as archaic as the graphics, I actually do find myself humming along with the fun, upbeat, cheery, and whimsical soundtrack. At the same time, the music is incessantly repetitive, and will insidiously get stuck in one's head. This is true with most other Taito classics as well, particularly **Jungle Hunt/ King** and **Elevator Action**.

I wish I could say that this game is as fun as it was back in the day, like **Tapper**, **Paperboy**, **Joust**, **Galaga**, or Taito's own **Zoo Keeper**. Unfortunately, this one hasn't aged as gracefully and my former favorite game is now only average. Much like many of the movies and TV shows I adored as a child. I wouldn't say it's a bad game, but then I can't really recommend it, either.

Cinematronics
Arcade
1984

Freeze

RANDOM REVIEWS

Dave G jumps into a tub filled with ice cubes to wake up after playing this game

Element	Dave	Cap	Thor
Graphics	3	1	1
Sound	1	1	1
Gameplay	2	1	1
OVERALL	2	1	1

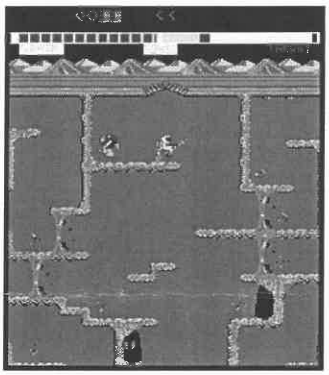
Features:

- **Power Crystals**
- **MONDO Crystals**
- **Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz...**

You remember how Captain America was frozen in an iceberg way back when WW II was going on? And then years later, in our "future" (read: the then-present) he was discovered, thawed, given a cup of chicken soup and taken in by the Avengers so that they could convince him to fight crime?

You don't? Shame on you!

Anyhoo, that's what happened with ol' Cap. And I have a sneaking suspicion that that's also what happened to the **Freeze** machine I recently got my hands on. For starters, there weren't any quarters or tokens in the coin box, only the errant frozen lima bean and some frost. And a can of frozen orange juice.

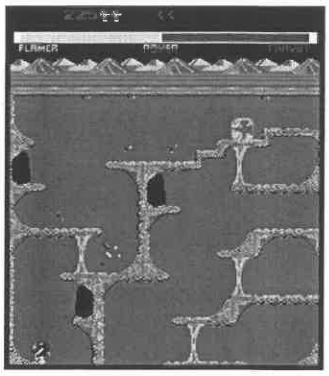


Despite the inclusion of the flamethrower, Freeze is almost as fun as watching ice melt!

I'm willing to bet that some game room operator got talked up by a hi-falootin' distributor and paid a fortune for this machine not realizing, until the distributor was sunning himself on a beach in Hawaii, just how badly Freeze would be received by his patrons.

Which isn't to say that Freeze is the worst game of all time. It's. Just. Zzzzzz... whoops! Sorry! Just. Dull. At the opening of the game, we're informed that our ship has suffered a heavy power loss, we're stranded on a desolate polar world, and gosh! Wouldn't you just know it? The only way to power up the ship again is to descend into the caverns below the planet's surface to get the "Mondo Crystal." Along the way, you can grab smaller "Power Crystals" to recharge your jetpack and flamethrower. Naturally, bumping into any of the polar creatures will immediately turn you into a popsicle, but you're able to blast them with your trusty flamethrower. At the closing of the instructions, the game reminds us to "keep moving, or FREEZE!" Which is good, because if you do stop and dawdle, you really will freeze to death.

What you're basically looking at, after watching your Imperial Shuttle styled spacecraft (with a broken top fin) land on the planet, is a platform/maze game. The levels scroll in all directions, and are several screens wide and several screens deep. A thrust button propels Mr. Spaceman around the icy caverns, but the control is sluggish at best. You'll often find yourself getting stuck on a ledge, or frozen into an ice wall because the control scheme is far from perfect.



Don't fall asleep at the controller, or else you'll FREEZE!

The big problem with this particular platformer is that there's almost nothing to do. It's easier to avoid the enemies than it is to try and shoot them. In the rare event that you do find yourself face to face with the red M&M (I really have no idea what this guy is supposed to be) or a bat, you'll usually melt the sluggish M&M, or get nailed by the lightning quick bat. Whee! Other than shooting these two guys, all you get to do is melt the occasional ice wall to keep moving along in search of... The Mondo Crystal! Find it, get out of the caverns and back to your ship, and you blast off. Evidently, the Mondo Crystal isn't all that Mondo though, since your ship loses power almost immediately and you have to go through the whole boring song and dance again.

Point values are low, "action" is weak and uninspired, and the sound, save the errant bleep or blip, is almost non-existent. But in this case, it's inappropriate. If we find out someday that Freeze was unfinished, I wouldn't be the least bit surprised.

So, yeah. I'd bet cold, hard cash that the operator used this particular Freeze cabinet as a makeshift icebox in an effort to recoup the hefty sum he undoubtedly paid for the machine when it was new. After Freeze turned out to be about as good a refrigerator as it was a game, the guy must have launched it into the ocean (a la Namor), where it traveled the globe until it got stuck somewhere and frozen into an iceberg. Perhaps the Avengers found it in between battling the Absorbing Man and Loki. Or perhaps a beach patrol posse picked it up and sent it over to the local Goodwill. Unlike the aftermath of the discovery of Captain America though, thawing out Freeze was probably not the best thing to do.

RANDOM REVIEWS

Lite Digital Press
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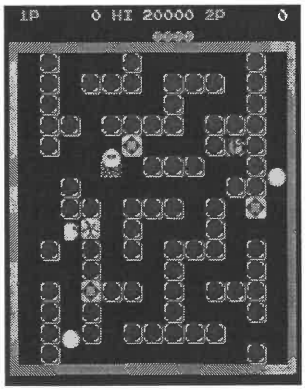
PENGO
Sega for Arcade
Kicked by Larry Anderson

4

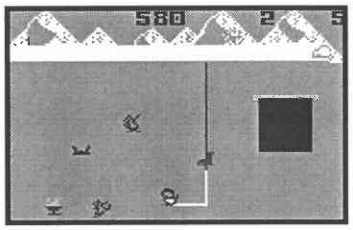
Sno-bees and penguins and ice blocks, oh my! Roll them all together and you get this synthesized maze/puzzle game called **Pengo**. Our slick-feathered friend has a rough time in this simple, maddening title. The round-blob Sno-Bees want to use their hammer-like appendages to pound you like an ice sculpture, you waddle like you've got nowhere to go, and what are these pesky diamond blocks in the middle of the screen blinking for?

The premise of the game is simple: use your mighty powers of kick to either send an ice block flying into a sno-bee, crushing them into a sno-cone, or beat them to the punch and break the ice block they're hiding in before they start on their cold task to thump you into your next quarter. But wait; remember those diamond blocks? Get all three of them lined up in the middle of the playfield, earn a 10,000 point bonus (do the same against one of the playfield walls and earn 5000 points). If this all didn't sound, well, coldly difficult, you've got the clock to work against... The faster you squish sno-bees, the more bonus points you earn.



Did I use enough snow, ice and other frozen references above? Cool! In all seriousness, this game is truly, um, a challenge. Your plucky penguin doesn't move too quickly. If you make a slow turn down an ice lane you're likely to get clobbered by two or three sno-bees camping out. By the time you clear enough ice off the field to do some serious work (you can crush an ice block propped up against another one), the sno-bees grow hair and head for the corners, ending the level. Did I mention the wonderful interlude after the second level, where you're treated to a row of pastel penguins, perpetrating a penchant for prissy posturing? Yeah, they're TRYING to dance.

All things said, if the soundtrack doesn't scare you off before completing the first level, you're a braver person than I. Consider this one okay-to-skip.



SNOW BROTHERS
Toaplan for Arcade
Snowed in with Dave G

6

There's no denying the influence of Taito's **Bubble Bobble** on Toaplan's **Snow Brothers**. Swap out the cute dinos of BB with cute snowmen, replace bubbles with snowballs, and replace the candy colored screens with frozen platforms and you're pretty much playing Snow Brothers. And it's a fun game with fifty different screens, boss battles, and whimsical music and sounds. So if you dig Bubble Bobble, you'll dig Snow Brothers too.

The main difference between the two games rests in the bubbles vs. snowballs motif. Bubbles float - they go up. Snowballs don't float - they go down. So where a player would create and chain several bubbles together and pop them all at once in BB, in Snow Brothers, players will want to time their snowball creation and rolling in order to steamroll several enemies at once.

I know I'm unfairly using Bubble Bobble as a point of reference here, but I'm willing to bet that you've ALL played Bubble Bobble. And if you haven't, well then, you've left yourself out in the cold. So make sure you check out BOTH games while you're snowed in this winter.

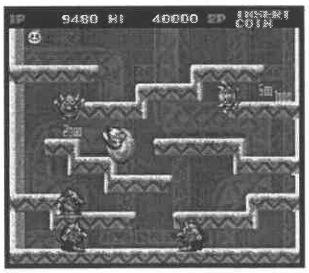
THIN ICE
INTV for Intellivision
Resurfaced by Larry Anderson

7

Duncan Penguin has a tough life... He spends his days skating around on a frozen pond, watching his buddies Bobo, Minky, P.J. and Norman (there's probably a great story behind where those names came from!) bounce around the ice senselessly like failed circus animals. So what's a talented bird with sharp blades to do? Send his buddies into the minus zero drink, of course!

Thin Ice's premise is incredibly simple. Cut nice squares around your friends (ala **Qix**), and watch them freeze like popsicles. Do this to all four, move on to the next level. But out to foil your rather simple chore is a pesky seal who's intent on doing a nose trick with you, sending you bounding across the ice like a hockey puck out of control if she happens to catch you. To aid you in your quest, you can snack on shrimp cocktails scattered about the ice, which help you skate faster. If the seal should hit one of your ice paths, she'll make a beeline for you; lose her with a quick zigzag, or a fast swim through one of your previously cut holes (hey, you ARE a penguin and can handle that sort of thing!).

You also have the occasional polar bear to deal with, which isn't as nimble as the seal, but hits you oh so much harder. But wait... hit that action button, watch the polar bear freeze in his tracks as you skate a circle around him and send him to visit Neptune. Find a stray lobster wandering the lake, and get another freeze for the next bear! If you should successfully drown your four pals, you're



Continued on page 20

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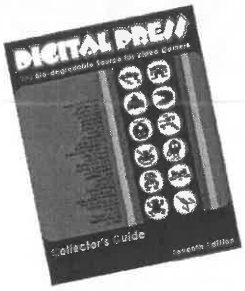

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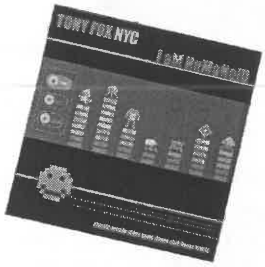

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ON THE PROWL

with Ian Baronofsky

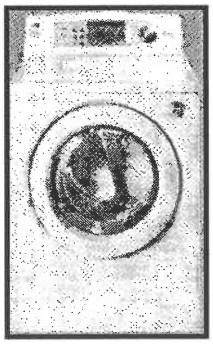
The weather outside is frightful, but The Hunt is so delightful...

It's cold outside! At least it was when I lived in Chicago. In Chicago, most people flocked indoors during the winter - can't blame them given the serious risk of frostbite. Well, the winter didn't stop me from shopping. Yeah, there were only 10% of the usual vendors out at the flea markets at best, but they were the scrappiest and most desperate, and my yield was pretty much the same as when the streets (parking lots, drive-ins) were packed in the summer. I remember a classic moment when I went to a market during a cold spell with flurries that had a few indoor vendors. I went outside and there was only one seller- Sockman. This crazy guy who always wears head to toe sweat clothes (just varying numbers of layers) with SOCKMAN stenciled on his chest was peddling his self-explanatory wares. He was actually yelling out to the snowflakes, "Socks! Get your socks!" He was almost as good as an indoor vendor I remember visiting in Indiana at a market that went year round who was Mr. Bones. Mr. Bones looked to have a connective tissue disorder as he was atypically tall and slim, thus his moniker. His chant was "Everything half off! Come see Mr. Bones," which you could hear through the entire market at all times. The great thing was that everything had price tags, which were ALWAYS half off. What's the point of these pointless anecdotes? Get out there! Don't let the cold keep you in. Of course, if you stay in, there's more for me. And that's probably why I never play enough games. I always go out.

MR. BONES! From Ian's local flea market to his very own Sega game. No wonder he's cold!

When you're indoors all winter (like I'm not), you have to do your scavenging at home. If you've already emptied out every box of stowed away stuff from Xmas past, you probably have to go with mail order, the shopping channel or the internet. Bets on most of you skipping the first two, given the dearth of options for video games by those means. Of course, the best place on the internet has to be eBay. And to get back to my favorite love/hate relationship, eBay.

Yeah, so for whatever reason (actually it's called spending sixteen hours a week selling junk on eBay), I had some extra paypal money recently, and it enlightened me to the plight of the eBay buyer. I had some money and I wanted to spend it on eBay. The problem was, I didn't know what I would be able to afford once the auctions ended. I could bid on $200 worth of stuff, but if I only had $150, I didn't know when to stop bidding, because I'd be guessing as to what I'd be overspending on once the auctions ended. And with those tempting unusual titles (yes I did get out-bid on them) clearly I could be overextending myself, not knowing what I'd win. So I started looking for Buy It Now auctions at market rates. I got a few nice scores, which evened the playing field, but basically it was an insight into what most buyers probably feel like.



Appliance X! Now available on eBay!

Joe eBay shows up wanting Appliance X. He sees that the prices for Appliance X are about half that of retail, so eBay is the way to go. Five different Appliance X auctions are up on eBay, but which to bid on? The one that's ending first already has a price that's higher than average two days before it ends. Scratch that. And the next two that will be ending have several bidders, but are well below market rate. Joe eBay puts in his bid for $5 above the average price (he does want to get the item in this century) on one of the items that is at minimum bid suddenly his bid is already up to $20 below market. He waits four days and when the auction ends, he has to start all over again because he was outbid in the last millisecond. Having lost patience, Joe eBay looks out for Buy It Now prices so that he can get the ball rolling - he wants Appliance X mailed to him before New

This guy dressed up as SOCKMAN! for Halloween. At least, we hope it was for Halloween...

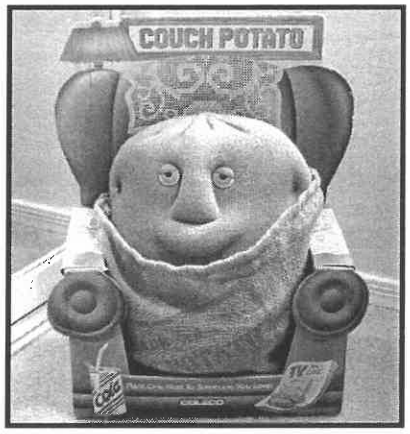
Year's.

Another scenario: Jane Collector has $200 that she's budgeted per month for eBay wastage. She does want to add to her collection of Super Nintendo games this month (she's a loose game collector - many of you might like her.) However, she bids on twenty items, and wins more than she anticipated. Now she needs $300 to cover the eBay purchases. I guess it's time to use the credit card and pay it back next month. Still, it's an annoyance, and it's clearly the reason that Buy It Now 'auctions' are so popular. There's no guessing.

It's also a testament to eBay's insight into the online auction business. The Buy It Now feature and its implementation were brilliant. The BIN feature is incredibly popular, particularly among infrequent and new users. I use it constantly for sales and purchases. People want access to person-to-person transactions, but the uncertainty of auctions is more than just a speed bump to ownership. It's totally freakin' frustrating.

The Earth Dies Screaming. Because it's so darn cold outside!

The collectibles market works a bit differently than other consumer markets. Collectors are more tolerant of the wait than usual consumers. The pursuit is part of the fun - or the dread. For the average consumer, immediate ownership is power, and immediate ownership is immediate satisfaction.



This Coleco Couch Potato recently went for $2.00 on ebay. Proof that prices are dropping and that you can buy or sell ANYTHING online.

The collectibles market is a proposition of dwindling returns. When eBay started, it was the world's online marketplace for junk and niche sales. Now it's the storefront for myriad businesses. It's the one place to go to get ANYTHING, collectible or actually useful. As the market share of other online auction houses became infinitesimal, eBay became the primary vehicle internationally of person-to-person transactions. The BIN was a direct hit into the vein of worldwide consumerism instant gratification. Furthermore, by attacking the rest of the world (the part interested in things made less than three years ago), eBay has improved its stranglehold on auction sales of all consumer items and improved its longevity.

You're probably still wondering how I justify that the collectibles market is shrinking. There are only a finite number of collectors, and they are a proactive bunch. The act of collecting is a hunting exercise. It's an activity of searching. Most collectors are aware of eBay and have used it. The few that haven't will slowly trickle onto the site, not accounting for much growth. And the many collectors that are already on eBay are filling up their cabinets, closets, attics, trunks, and a few boxes labeled "back to eBay." Only the premium rarities that are so unusual as to have limited exposure on eBay over the years have retained value or gained in price. Most everything else has dropped in price over the years. It's a great time to get reasonably rare stuff on eBay, but it's a less great time to be a seller. People are far pickier than past days, and you just can't sell anything old and kooky like you used to be able to. Despite the withering collectibles market, everyone wins. Sellers are still getting reasonable cash for crap, and buyers are getting tough items for reasonable prices. The likelihood of erratic price wars occurring on your sale are less than in past years.

For example, check out a bona fide rarity like Atari 2600 **Earth Dies Screaming** on eBay. Average price: $10. I'd pay that much at a flea market (and I should pay less than eBay, hopefully, in the wild) and not feel guilty. As these penny ante transactions become less of a revenue stream, eBay has already won the shell game by making its site the one place to go for new items, not just old. Most collectibles began their lives as consumer items made in the tens of thousands. EBay saw the writing on the wall; as supply outstrips demand (and more vendors and home-makers raid their attic stockpiles,) these items lose value and make eBay less money. And with shrinking prices come shrinking profits from fees. They know it's time to take the profit out of small fry sales and discourage final prices under $10, and they've done this by raising fees gradually and unfalteringly. And yes I wish I'd bought eBay shares when I signed up seven years ago. At least I'd be paying myself a little bit of that fee money.

Shrinking prices, shrinking profits, Shrinky Dinks! All found online at ebay, the worldwide garage sale.

If I had a little more sense, I'd spend a few extra days indoors playing games, and not just buying them. But I don't, and I spend more time hunting (on eBay and at home, indoors, out of the cold) than I should. But just because it's cold doesn't mean you have to be. Bundle up, and check out your local junkman. And the deals on eBay are hot, so go get 'em.

If you're a Cold Miser, get out there and visit the local flea markets! But if you're a Heat Miser, stay home on log on to ebay to check out all of the HOT deals.

ICE CLIMBER™

Continued from page12

they produce piles of it in their kill-crazy rampage up the mountain, but it's all part of their mysterious ways.

There you have it, my friends. It is a bizarre lifestyle, true, but it is the way of the Eskimo. Destruction, bone-crushing death, and eggplant. The rest of us can only dream. ☒

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

Continued from page 11

you have no idea which direction to go next. The wide-open format of the cities is a big positive for this game. There may be a few different ways to get to each checkpoint, often with an optimal route, some of which you have to discover, and some that you will find by following the computer cars. The Parisian shortcuts are among the most exciting with a lot of air and rooftop action. The computer competition is another high point of this game (those bastards!) They can be downright ruthless and are the most common cause of 'hit reset' syndrome. And the level of difficulty is jacked up (it's a reasonably tough game) to a nice point where your first few races in a goal give you the impression that you won't be able to win the race. A few more races and you are kicking computer car's ass to the point where you think you might win. With some persistence, you probably will, and most often by less than a second. Pretty exciting stuff.

The traffic is pretty outrageous at times as well. Hitting a car while moving 150 mph results in a noticeable projectile effect and really slows you down. Sometimes the traffic swerves into you, sometimes away from you, and buses cause intense pain by slowing you to a halt when you hit them. The cars you are piloting (you win a new one every other race) have different handling characteristics (basically light or heavy), and the difficulty is balanced enough that if you find a car you like from a few races back, you can still race with it for several races without getting completely outpaced. My limited experience with the online facets of the game elicits the same thoughts that most Xbox Live games do. 1) Xbox Live is a neat service. 2) Never go online until you finished the offline component of the game. 3)Playing with strangers is never as much fun as playing with your friends. 4) You suck at video games, so don't bother going online. The Xbox Live feature that allows you to pick players with appropriate skill levels would be more useful if there were more people playing MC2 online at any given time, and if people adhered to realistic appraisals of their skills more commonly. Clearly if I could get a load of friends and acquaintances (like the folks from the DP online forum) on my Xbox Live friends list, it would be much more fun, and skill levels would matter even less as we heckled each other across the country by way of the handy dandy Xbox Live communicator.

I am enjoying this title, despite the linear story line and minor control issues. Traffic and computer competitors are solid, and make for an enjoyable ride for all fifteen or twenty hours you'll get out of this title. If you don't like checkpoints, don't check out this game. This title won't convert RPGers to twitch drivers, and it certainly doesn't claim the supposed depth of a **Gran Turismo** title. It does respectfully nod to other arcade styled racers and makes for a good diversion with balanced difficulty. ☒

SNOW JOB

Continued from page9

Tag" looks like something out of the **Action Max** library of VHS games. You won't be impressed with these, but at least they DO serve a purpose. Each mini-game will lead you to a clue or important area in the game, so bear with them.

All of this and I haven't even discussed the actual video segments of the game! They're fairly well-done. I've seen worse acting on any Sci-Fi channel exclusive, really. The cast is a mixture of stereotypes and not-ready-for-prime-time television actors, but they get the job done. There are some surprisingly bad scenes (the voice acting from your character is commonly among these) but also some surprisingly good ones. The script is definitely mature in nature which helps, though hearing "shit" and seeing bullet-wounds in a game like this still catches me off guard. During the video segments you will often be required to "choose a path" in the conversation. Some of these choices are obvious, others are not. Usually when a day isn't completed properly it's because you chose the wrong conversation path, I found. Hitting on the stripper isn't a good idea, for example.

So where does the assessment leave the overall review of Snowjob? Well, you have very good visuals and sound, an easy-to-use interface, and a decent story with a number of paths and side-stories. It loses a few points in replay value, but that's to be said for most any "solve the story" game. Listen, even if you simply HATE FMV games, this one is worth a look.

I'd recommend seeking this one out! It's a solid game that will keep your attention for awhile, even if it doesn't have enough Tracy Scoggins for my tastes. ☒

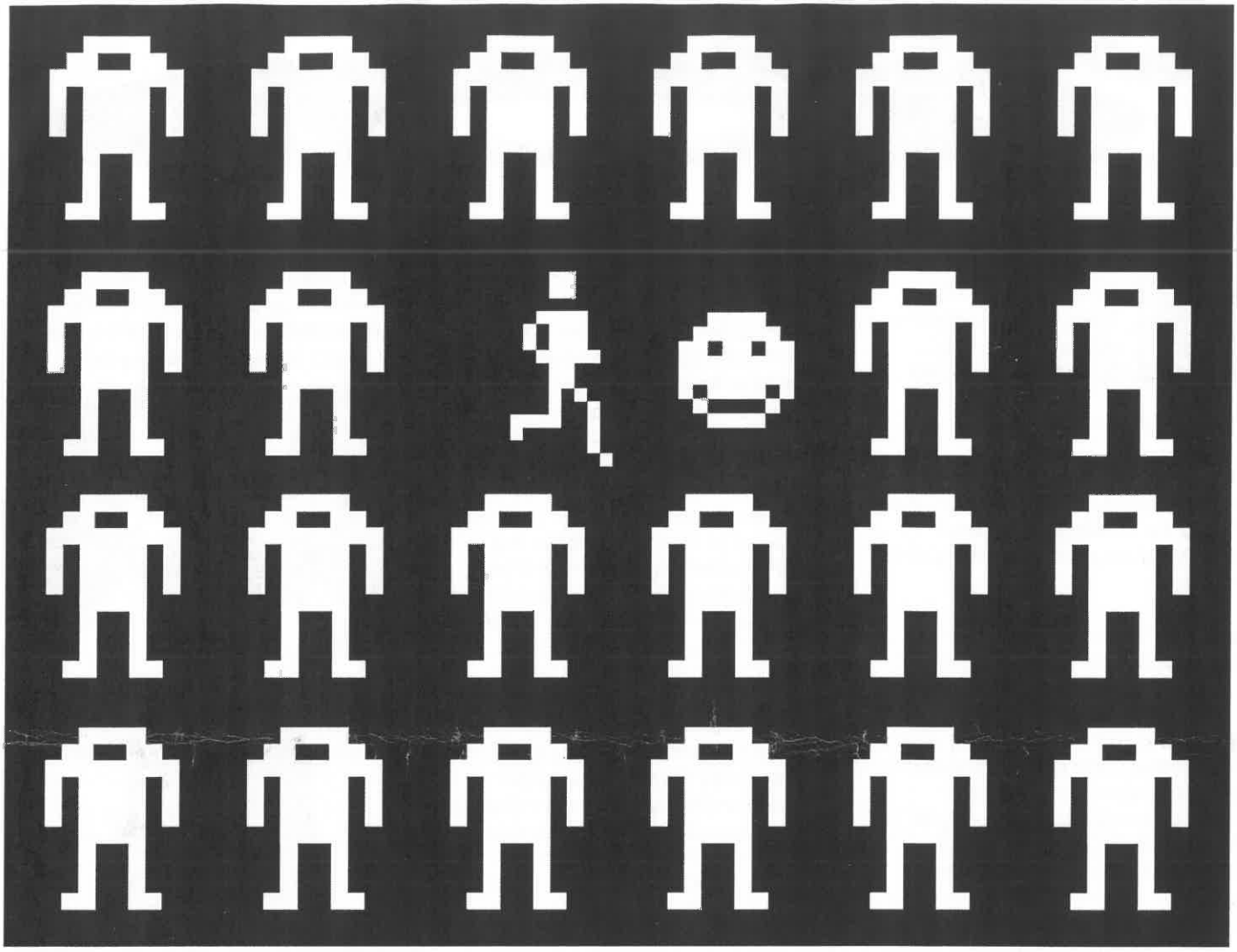
THIN ICE

Continued from page 16

treated to a pretty cool intermission where your pal Duncan drives around on the lake in a Zamboni, magically restoring the ice to its former unbroken glory... and then you get to do it all over again.

The game gets fairly repetitive after the first couple of levels; the other penguins move quicker, the seal gets smarter, the polar bear punches harder. The game has a rather catchy soundtrack (done by the Team Fat guys) to keep things upbeat, and this being one of the later INTV releases, the graphics and action are about as good as you can expect from an Intellivision title. So if you're looking for a quick way to burn a few minutes, shred some ice with our pal Duncan and be sure to have the hot chocolate ready when you're done... all that skating and swimming is sure to leave you chilly! ☒

WHY KILL YOURSELF?



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DVD de jour

by Dave Giarrusso

Ice Age

Distributor: 20th Century Fox, 2002. Director: Chris Wedge. Aspect ratio: 1.85:1. Sound: Dolby Digital 5.1. Running time: 81 minutes. (US region 1 disc reviewed)

Plot: A ragtag band of prehistoric animal misfits who are migrating south to escape the imminent cold spell attempts to reunite a lost human child with his tribe.

Extras: Lots of extras are included in this two disc presentation of Ice Age: full length audio commentary by the directors; six deleted scenes; "Making Of" and "Behind the Scenes" documentaries; and two animated shorts, *Scrat's Missing Adventure* and the decidedly oddball *Bunny* fill out the bulk of the list. The DVD also includes nearly a dozen interactive games aimed suqarely at the younger crowd. Neanderthals with terminally serious brain freeze will also be glad to know that a crummy fullscreen (ack!) version of the flick is also included here, alongside the vastly superior widescreen version.

Picture: With a digitally created and animated film, you'd expect top notch video, and with *Ice Age*, that's exactly what you get - a cool, crisp image.

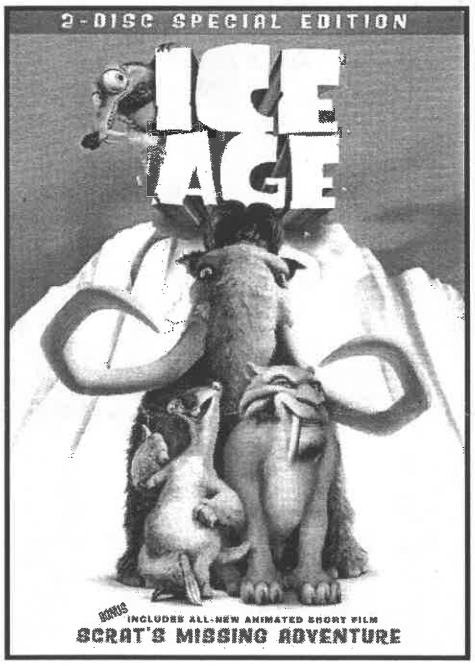
Sound: "You are there" with this disc's fantastic 5.1 Surround sound.

Overall Feel: Like so many animated features before it, (*Titan A.E.*, *The Land Before Time*, etc.) *Ice Age* involves a motley crew of friends who go on a journey, and learn a lot about each other and themselves along the way.

I generally find John Leguizamo and Ray Romano quite annoying, but they both turn in very good performances here and the film surprised me with its overall quality. Denis Leary does a great job in his turn as the sabertooth cat and you'll also note that Fox mainstays Stephen Root (aka Milton in *Office Space* and Bill Dauterive on *King of the Hill*) and Diedrich Bader (of *Drew Carey Show* fame) provide some of the secondary character voices.

And what of that nutty Scrat? The Scrat character was used heavily in the promotion of the film, encountering various titles during commercial breaks from Fox TV shows like the Simpsons. Truth to tell, the Scrat character annoyed me before I had a chance to see the movie, but (s)he is utilized to perfection as the film unfolds. Like the classic Tex Avery 'toons of yore, Scrat shows up every now and then throughout Ice Age with a nod and a wink to those earlier days of animation... and cleverly gets some laughs out of the audience in the process.

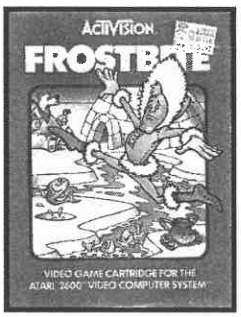
Though I had originally intended to give Ice Age the cold shoulder, I'm glad that I didn't. It's a cool little film with some really great moments, and without the hackneyed song and dance fests that were so overused in animation until recently. This one's been spotted for as little as $10 brand new, and it's well worth every cent.



Ice Age features a badass wooly mammoth and a badass sabretooth tiger. And a silly sloth and scrat.

As you may have guessed upon seeing the wooly mammoth, there's nothing videogame related in Ice Age. However, UbiSoft produced an Ice Age *game for the Gameboy Advance.*

All in all though, I prefer the chilly gameplay of Steve Cartwright's 2600 hit, Frostbite. *To this day, I can't bask in the warming glow of the 2600 without playing Frostbite. The graphics are excellent, the sounds are on target, and the finely tuned difficulty leads to fast and furious play during later levels. And unlike Ice Age, the focus of Frostbite is building a home to hibernate in. Amen to that.*



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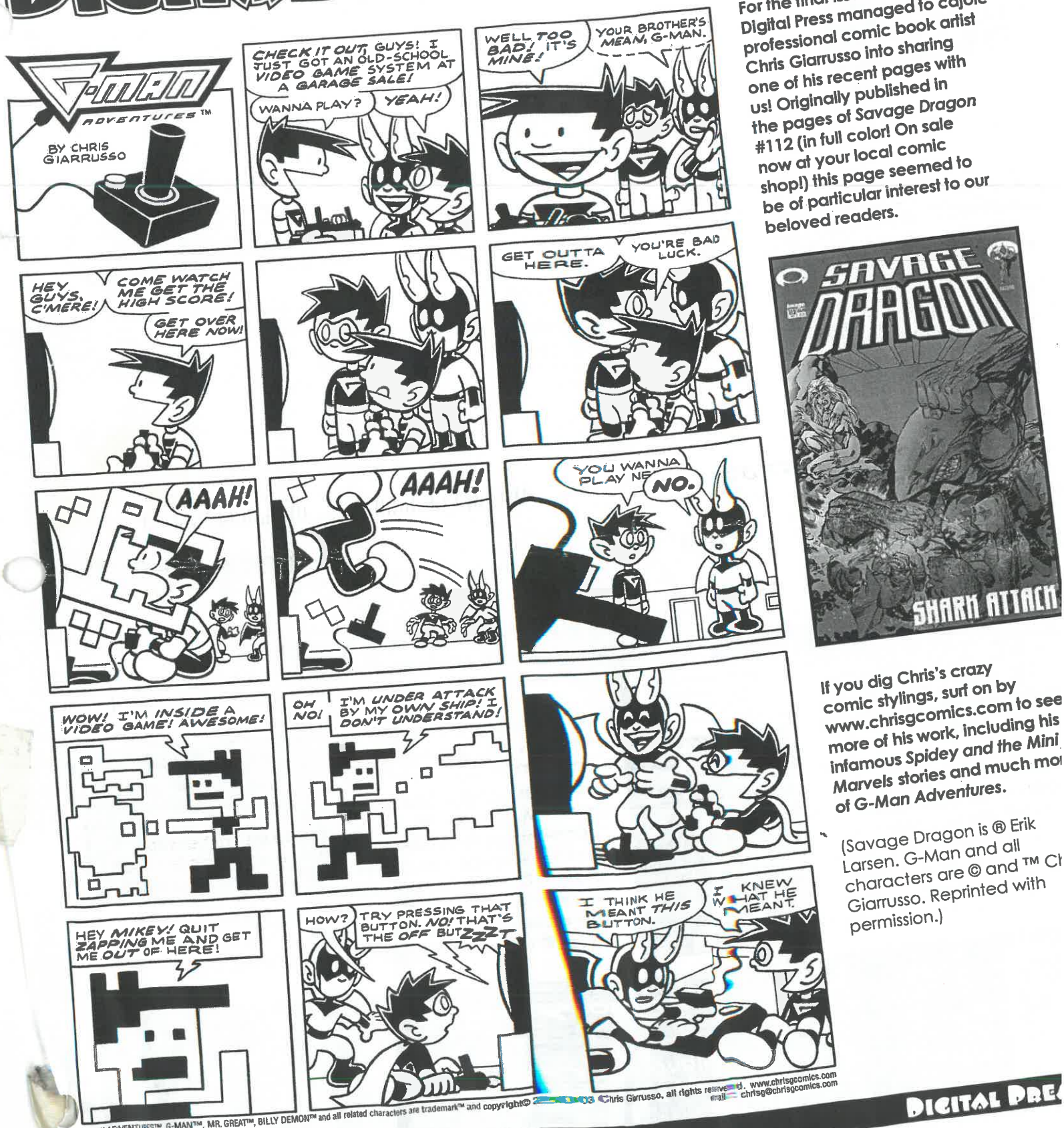
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WELL, TOO BAD, IT'S MINE!
YOUR BROTHER'S MEAN, G-MAN.
HEY GUYS, C'MERE!
COME WATCH ME GET THE HIGH SCORE!
GET OVER HERE NOW!
GET OUTTA HERE.
YOU'RE BAD LUCK.
AAAH!
AAAH!
YOU WANNA PLAY ME
NO.
WOW! I'M INSIDE A VIDEO GAME! AWESOME!
OH NO!
I'M UNDER ATTACK BY MY OWN SHIP! I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
HEY MIKEY! QUIT ZAPPING ME AND GET ME OUT OF HERE!
HOW?
TRY PRESSING THAT BUTTON. NO! THAT'S THE OFF BUTZZZT
I THINK HE MEANT THIS BUTTON.
I KNEW WHAT HE MEANT.

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For the final issue of 2003, Digital Press managed to cajole professional comic book artist Chris Giarrusso into sharing one of his recent pages with us! Originally published in the pages of Savage Dragon #112 (in full color! On sale now at your local comic shop!) this page seemed to be of particular interest to our beloved readers.

If you dig Chris's crazy comic stylings, surf on by www.chrisgcomics.com to see more of his work, including his infamous Spidey and the Mini Marvels stories and much mo of G-Man Adventures.

(Savage Dragon is ® Erik Larsen. G-Man and all characters are © and ™ Ch Giarrusso. Reprinted with permission.)

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sure to visit the DP website ear during the holiday or our annual "Secret vent. Santa's been an eye on ALL the gamers, and nice. Nice gamers rticipating in the game- . The naughty gamers will

receive the traditional lump of coal in their stockings. Ho ho ho! Happy Holidays!

SEND US YOUR "ROOM OF DOOM"!

We've made another big update to the Room of Doom pages at http://www.digitpress.com! Stop on by and visit the virtual game rooms of dozens of collectors just like you! Marvel at the massive libraries! Gaze in wonder at the gargantuan groups of games. Develop decoration and storage ideas! And whether you've got eight or eighty-thousand games in your basement, attic, garage, rumpus-room or kitchen, feel free to send us photos of YOUR Room of Doom! Game ON!

Digital Press is dedicated to the memory of my best friend and DP co-creator, Kevin Oleniacz.

Kevin's spirit will be with us through every homing missile fired, knockout punch delivered, UFO destroyed, and finish line crossed.

Play recklessly. Think positively. Live EVERY moment to the fullest.